- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

Ferries to have totemic motif,



WHEN the three vessels for the Southeast Alaska ferry route were still on the drafting boards, it was announced that Northwest Coast Indian designs had been adopted as the theme for the interior decorations. "Northwest Coast" covers a great deal of territory, from Oregon to the Aleutians, and "Indian design" has become a rather loose term which today includes a lot of stuff that wouldn't be touched by a real Indian with a forty-foot totem pole. Nevertheless, it appears that the decor of the ferries may at least approximate some of the aboriginal art and craft work of the area in which the vessels will operate, although the renditions for the most part will be in plastics and other materials never dreamed of by early Indian artisans. Most of the work

is being done by commercial shops in the Lower 48.

On each ship, however, there will be one figure carved in Alaska yellow cedar by an Alaskan Indian, working in Alaska. And it appears at this writing that two of the three figures may be Alaskan in design as well.

The carver of these three figures is Amos Wallace, a 42-year-old Tlingit Indian who makes his home in Juneau where he does craft work, mostly carving of one kind or another, under the auspices of the United States Indian Arts and Crafts Board. Amos was born in the village of Hoonah on Chichagof Island and lived there until he was nine years old. As is the custom among the Tlingits, Amos' education was taken over by an uncle when he was a small boy and from

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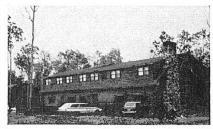


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Bob DeArmond

This Eagle with folded wings is Amos' own design and was carved in Alaska yellow cedar. It stands approximately 20 inches hiah.

this uncle came his first lessons in the carving craft and his first knowledge of the traditional designs of his people.

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Bob DeArmon

Amos Wallace at work on the Thunderbird, using one of his hand-made carving knives with a double-edged, curved blade. Other knives of the same type, with varying degrees of curve to the blade, are on the workbench.

When Amos was nine his family moved from Hoonah to Juneau where he attended the Catholic parochial school. He then went to Skagway to the Pius X Mission and from there to Wrangell Institute, a boarding school operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Shoemaker Bay near Wrangell. There one of his instructors was E. L. Keithahn, now curator of the Alaska Historical Museum and a frequent contributor to Alaska Sportsman.

In 1940, having finished his formal schooling, Amos returned to Juneau and took up wood carving seriously and for profit, but World War II soon interrupted his work. He served in the Army Transportation Corps from 1942 until 1945, mostly on small boats in Aleutian waters. On VJ Day in 1945 he was at Teller, close to the Arctic Circle and about as far north as he has any desire to go. Following his discharge, Amos returned to Juneau and put in a couple of years at wood carving, with summers off for commercial salmon fishing.

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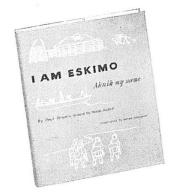
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Bob DeArmor

Amos Wallace has strong and sure hands as he carves his cedar.

He next moved to Portland, Oregon, where he first worked in a restaurant, then joined a novelty company as a craftsman. He stayed there for eleven years, making ivory cribbage boards, pen sets and other such items, with some wood carving on his own when other work was slack. In 1958 while Amos was in Alaska for the salmon fishing season he received an offer from the Abraham and Strauss Department Store in Brooklyn, New York, to carve a twelve foot totem pole. He accepted the offer and spent six weeks in Brooklyn, working on the pole, talking about Alaska, and explaining Tlingit culture. The pole, when completed, was given by Abraham and Strauss to the Children's Museum of Brooklyn, with Amos making the formal presentation in Tlingit.

The work in Brooklyn brought an invitation from Cincinnati, Ohio, where Amos appeared on the Ohio school television circuit and made personal appearances at Shillito's Department Store to demonstrate his carving technique. Two

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Devilfish mask. This is a replica of a famed Indian ceremonial mask and is carved in alder wood.

three-foot poles were carved there. He then went to Pittsburgh and made talks in grade schools and on both radio and television before he returned to work for the novelty company in Portland.

Amos was back at Shillito's in Cincinnati the following year and there carved a large story pole which was designed by himself and his brother, Lincoln Wallace. At the top of this pole is Raven, creator of the world in Tlingit mythology and symbol of Amos' own clan. Raven holds a star, representing the new State of Alaska, and below him is the Big Dipper, Alaska's emblem. Next on the pole is a Frontiersman in coonskin cap holding a box which represents Hope, while the bottom figure is Tecumseh, the famed Shawnee Indian chief and warrior who was born in Ohio. This pole was presented to the Museum of Natural History in Cincinnati, where it now stands.

The State of Alaska employed Amos



A replica of a widely-known Shaman's rattle in Bear design, executed by Amos. The rattle is hollow and contains small pebbles which rattle as it is shaken.

on his next major carving job, a story pole for the Oregon Centennial in Portland. Again he had the help of his brother, Lincoln, in designing the pole which includes Raven at the top, Sacajawea and her baby, Captain Meriwether Lewis with his telescope and Captain William Clark with his maps. The bottom figure is Beaver, representing Ore-

This coy Killer Whale, holding his own tail in his teeth, was carved by Amos Wallace from Alaska yellow cedar and stands approximately 24 inches high to the top of the fin.





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Amos Wallace at work on his Thunder Bird. He uses many special carving tools he fashioned himself.



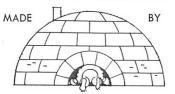
Among the lovely things Wallace has created is this ten inch long Raven Bowl done in yellow cedar.

gon, the Beaver State, and the pole now stands in the residence of the Secretary of State in Salem, Oregon.

The summer of 1960 saw Amos at Disneyland in California and there he carved fifteen poles which stand in the "Indian Village" of that famed show place. From there Amos went to Boston, Massachusetts, and carved eight poles which are in the Children's Museum in that city.

For the past year Amos has been in Juneau where he has done a variety of wood carving and is also learning silversmithing and engraving. Late last summer, on the basis of his bid of \$600, he was awarded a contract to carve three Thunderbirds for the Alaska ferries. The artist's drawing for these figures show the legendary bird with outstretched wings—a very popular design which belongs to the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia rather than to Alaska. The first of these carvings, for the ferry Malaspina, is shown at the head of this article, although the figure was slightly modified after our photograph was taken. Amos faithfully followed the artist's sketch, which shows Thunderbird with

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Above—Sea lion bowl in yellow cedar is about 12 inches long. Below Amos Wallace is not restricted to wood in his art. Here are some unusual Alaska serpentine carvings he has done from stone he secured on an expedition last summer to Red Bluff Bay on Baranof Island.



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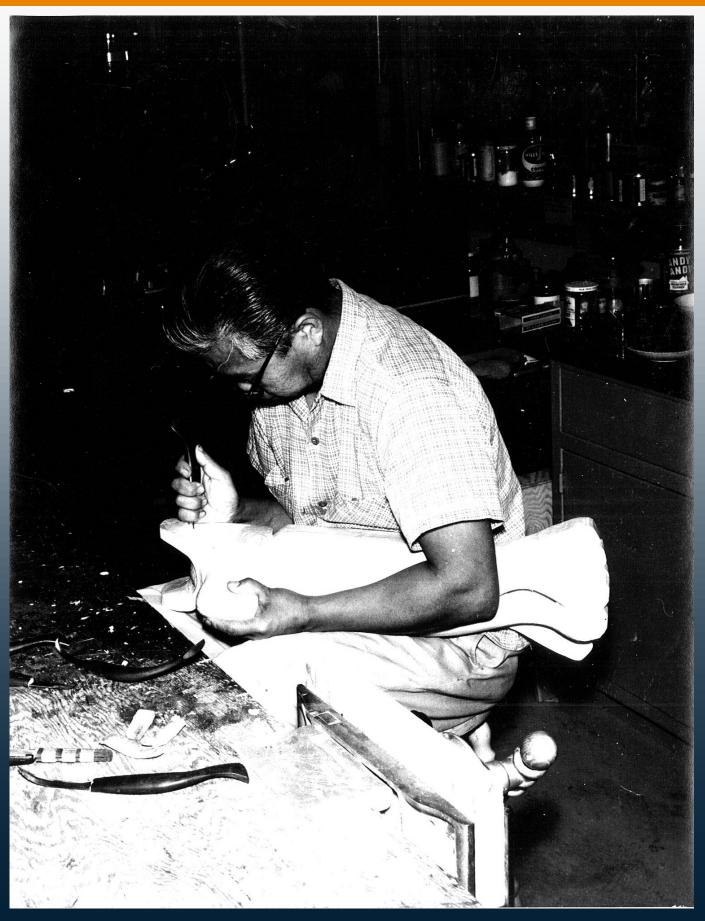
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a mouthful of teeth.

"Who ever heard of a bird, even a Thunderbird, with teeth?" Amos growled and presented his case to Richard A. Downing, Alaska's Commissioner of Public Work's under whose department the ferries are being built and will operate.

Commissioner Downing authorized a modification of the Thunderbird and also gave Amos permission to substitute other figures, if he desires, for the other two ferry carvings. Amos at once removed the teeth from Thunderbird and substituted a tongue. And as this is being written, he is busy designing figures for the ferries Taku and Matanuska. He is not yet ready to announce just what they will be, but one thing is sure—they will be Alaskan Indian figures, in keeping with what Amos Wallace believes is fitting and proper for vessels bearing Alaskan names and sailing the waters of

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Picture provided by Roger Jack

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